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Guidelines for Safe Handling of Owl Pellets

- Dissection of owl pellets should be completed in one day, be conducted in as few classrooms as possible, and separate from all eating areas. If eating in the classroom is unavoidable, it should take place prior to dissection. As always, hands should be washed prior to any food consumption.
- There should be enough adults present during dissection activities to provide adequate supervision to the students.
- Students should use gloves while dissecting pellets and cleaning up afterwards. At the start of dissection activities, students should be trained on proper glove use, including how to take them off, how to dispose of them and then to wash their hands immediately afterward.
- Students should be provided with disposable trays or plates to work on and should not be dissecting directly on desks or tabletops.
- Students should use only dissection tools provided; DO NOT allow use of any personal items while dissection is occurring such as pencils, pens, or other items that may be stored in a student's desk.
- Dissection tools should be collected at the end of the dissection activity and not stored on individual student trays. If possible, have students use disposable tools that can be thrown away at the end of the project. If this is not possible, tools should be immediately sanitized.
- Assist students in thoroughly cleaning and sanitizing work surfaces after dissection takes place. Use ONLY cleaning agents and sanitizers that are effective in killing viruses and bacteria. Check the manufacturer's labeling to ensure proper usage (e.g. the term "tuberculocidal" connotes a hospital level of disinfectant activity). Common household bleach at a 1:10 dilution with water can be used to sanitize many surfaces in the classroom.
- DO NOT allow students to drink from water fountains or taps at the handwashing sinks during dissection or clean up after owl pellet dissection.
- Use disposable paper towels for clean up; DO NOT use sponges. Sponges can retain viable bacteria in the room and spread them onto other surfaces.
- Make sure all sinks used for handwashing are well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels and that handwashing signs are posted. Insist that students wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after their gloves are removed and discarded. DO NOT let them crowd around sinks in the classroom; make sure there is adequate room for thorough handwashing.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize handwashing sinks and adjacent areas when clean up after dissection is complete.